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Creeping Stagnation

THE EDITORS

Philosophy of Engels Vindicated

DONALD D. WEISS

Student Struggle at Brown University

MARK D. MATTHEWS

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Many of you have written in to tell us about difficulties with your subscriptions, lost checks, unanswered letters, etc. For a long time we were unable to account for many of these seeming anomalies and tended to put more blame on the postal service than it apparently deserved. But careful checking over a period of time revealed an unexpected source of "human error" which has now been corrected, we hope to the satisfaction of all concerned. We cannot be sure, however, that all cases of mishandling of incoming material have been located, and we must ask those of you who still have outstanding complaints to write once more, giving whatever details you believe to be relevant. We will try to straighten matters out as soon as possible and close the books once and for all on these regrettable incidents.

We record with sorrow the death on November 25th at the age of 72 of Dr. Theodor Rosebury, an eminent scientist whose passion for social justice matched his devotion to the discovery of truth. Dr. Rosebury was the author of "Columbus and the Indians" (MR, April 1974) in which he refuted the all too well established myth that syphilis was brought to Europe from the New World by members of Columbus's crew. Dr. Rosebury had at that time recently retired as a professor of bacteriology and had agreed in principle to write science articles for MR from time to time, as soon as he could complete work on a number of pending projects, including an autobiographical account of his medical practice and a major

(*Continued on inside back cover*)

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CREEPING STAGNATION

Hopes ran high as the economy began to turn around in the last quarter of 1975. The rosy expectations of a vigorous recovery, however, did not last long. Although at first the economic advance seemed to resemble the strong upswings of the cycles of the past 25 years, beginning in the summer of 1976 it became apparent that the recovery was quickly losing momentum. Moreover, the slowdown and the persistence of high rates of unemployment were not confined to the United States but characterized almost all advanced capitalist countries. This was bad enough. But what really began to worry the more serious business analysts was the weakness of capital investment, since sustained recovery depends on a healthy advance in capital accumulation. Thus *Business Week* wrote in its issue of September 13, 1976:

> The world's key economies may be exhibiting the outward signs of recovery, but the growth of capital spending—which should be rising with the recovery—is extraordinarily sluggish. Why spending is so slow is puzzling to economic policy-makers in the leading industrial countries.

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In fact, however, the lagging of capital investment and the general weakness of the recovery are far from puzzling events if they are viewed historically. The 1974-1975 recession sent forth clear signals that something new was in the wind, and the years that preceded the recession had already witnessed the emergence of unusually severe economic imbalances. Not all of these were particularly novel, but almost all of them had in the previous decade grown to such an extent that they stamped a new brand on the next phases of the cycle, the recession of 1974-1975 and the subsequent recovery of 1975-1976.

The latest downward swing of the business cycle was in a fundamental sense typical, since it was triggered by overproduction relative to effective demand. Toward the end of the boom producers had begun to turn out more goods than could either be sold or prudently held in inventory. Stocks of unsold goods piled up in the warehouses and storerooms of manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers. As a result, capitalists responded as they must: production was cut back and workers laid off.

But that was only part of the story this time, for the downturn followed on the heels of a period of rapidly accelerating credit expansion and inflation, feverish speculation in real estate and other markets, a long decline in corporate liquidity, tottering of large banks, and, last but not least, international monetary crises. These interrelated developments had been intensifying since the late 1960s, and they left their mark on the 1974-1975 recession, producing not only the deepest decline since the end of the Second World War, but also the paradoxical continuation of an upward price spiral alongside mass unemployment and declining real consumer income.

Against this background, it should come as no surprise that the ensuing recovery would also display differences from earlier upturns. Indeed, the several phases of the current cycle —boom, recession, and recovery—are all of a piece, each one revealing in its own way that the long wave of expansion since the Great Depression of the 1930s has been receding. The crucial point is that the special factors which kept capital accumulation relatively strong during the 1950s and 1960s have been losing strength or actually disappearing. And because of

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this the capitalist world has been tending toward stagnation, an economic condition in which deep recessions and weak recoveries are to be expected.*

The distinctive features of this new stage of stagnation become strikingly apparent when the extraordinary amount of government financial stimulus involved in the most recent turnaround from recession to recovery is contrasted with the experience of the recessions of the 1950s and 1960s. As is well known, bourgeois economists and government policy-makers pin their hopes on federal budget deficits to start the ball rolling when the economy falters, expecting in this way to fill a growing gap between demand and production capacity. The reasoning is quite simple. The effect of a balanced budget on the economy, it is held, is usually neutral: the lowering of demand by individuals and businesses due to tax payments is offset by an equal demand created by government spending.** But when the government spends more than it takes in, total demand for goods and services increases, and, assuming there is sufficient idle capacity and unemployment, the economy is stimulated to produce more and create more jobs. (A deficit develops automatically during recessions as long as government spending remains level, since tax collections decline along with reduced employment and income; an increase in government spending under these circumstances will naturally enlarge the deficit.)

Now let us look at what has been happening in this area. Table 1 (page 4) presents information for recession years since the Second World War, along with annual data since 1971. What cries out for attention in the first column of this table is the exceptionally large $71.2 billion federal deficit in 1975 as compared with deficits of previous recessions. Before we attempt to interpret this enormous difference, however, we must ask whether

* A fuller discussion of this point is presented in the Reviews of the Month on "The Economic Crisis in Historical Perspective" in the March and April 1975 issues of MONTHLY REVIEW.

** This is of course an oversimplification, since government spending may have a greater or smaller impact on the rest of the economy than the purchases which individuals and businesses would have made if taxes had been lower.

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TABLE 1

	Federal Government Deficit		Gross National Product (GNP) of Private Economy	Deficit as % of GNP
	Billions of Current $	Billions of Constant $	Billions of Constant $	Column 2 ÷ column 3 x 100)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1949	2.6	6.2	426.7	1.5
1953	7.1	14.1	534.9	2.6
1958	10.3	17.7	586.1	3.0
1967	13.2	18.2	874.6	2.1
1971	22.0	23.8	964.3	2.5
1972	17.3	17.3	1,026.7	1.7
1973	6.9	6.5	1,087.0	0.6
1974	11.7	10.0	1,065.5	0.9
1975	71.2	54.8	1,042.6	5.3
1976 (1st half)	59.0	42.9	1,101.6	3.9

SOURCE: Data from *Survey of Current Business* (January, September, and October 1976). The data in column 1 are not the official federal budget figures, but are adjusted by the Commerce Department for comparability with the gross national product accounts. Column 2 was calculated using the implicit price index for federal government purchases of goods and services, with 1972=100. Column 3 represents the gross domestic national product minus federal, state, and local government components. Data for the first half of 1976 are at an annual rate.

it is simply the consequence of (1) inflation or (2) the increasing size of the economy as a whole. To answer the first question, column 2 provides the deficit statistics adjusted for price changes. Here we see that even in constant dollars the 1975 deficit was more than three times as high as the largest deficit in the 1950s and 1960s, and almost two and a half times the 1971 deficit. Note also that even as the economy recovered —in the first half of 1976—the deficit remained considerably higher than in any previous postwar year except 1975.* And to answer the second question, column 4 compares the deficits of each year with the gross national product of the private economy in the same years, showing that the *relative* size of the deficit in 1975 is 80 percent above the highest previous per-

* To simplify the presentation, not all the high-deficit years are shown in Table 1. None of the excluded years, however, contradicts this statement. Thus there were only two other years when the deficits, in constant dollars, reached above $10 billion: 1954—$11.9 billion, and 1970—$14 billion.

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centage (5.3 percent in 1975 compared to 3 percent in 1958). Moreover, even in 1976, a recovery year, the government ran a deficit that relative to private gross national product was significantly greater than in the recession year of 1958.

TABLE 2

	Federal Government Deficit	Gross Private Investment	Deficit as % of Private Investment (Column 1 ÷ column 2 x 100)
	In billions of current $		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
1949	2.6	35.3	7.4
1953	7.1	53.3	13.3
1958	10.3	61.9	16.6
1967	13.2	120.8	10.9
1971	22.0	160.0	13.8
1972	17.3	188.3	9.2
1973	6.9	220.5	3.1
1974	11.7	215.0	5.4
1975	71.2	183.7	38.8
1976 (1st half)	59.0	234.4	25.2

SOURCE: Same as Table 1.

Still more instructive are the figures in Table 2 showing the size of the deficit compared to gross private domestic investment. The three types of business investment included under this heading—inventory accumulation, residential construction, and plant and equipment (machinery, factories, power stations, etc.)—are the most important levers of the business cycle. They are the prime movers which pull the economy up and push it forward during prosperity periods and exert the major downward pressures during recessions and depressions. What is especially noteworthy, therefore, is that even in the 1950s, when the underlying expansionist forces in the private economy were still relatively strong, the government's supporting stimulus kept on increasing from recession to recession. Thus, in 1949 the deficit was only 7.4 percent of private investment, rising to 13.3 percent in 1953 and 16.6 percent in 1958. This by itself suggests that the growth elements in the private economy were already showing signs of weakening toward the end of the 1950s.

Signs of the approaching exhaustion of the long postwar

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wave of expansion cropped up more frequently beginning in the 1960s. But it is also in this period that there was a persistent tendency in Washington to raise spending levels. By 1974 federal government purchases of goods and services (in constant dollars) were almost 50 percent above 1960. Yet despite the increasing role of government, and the spur provided by the war in Vietnam and an enormous growth of credit, the normal capitalist tendency toward stagnation became increasingly powerful, with recession declines in gross capital investment—the area where the stagnation forces are lodged—steadily rising: in constant dollars, the drop in the 1953-1954 recession was 12 percent, in 1957-1958 it was 19 percent, finally reaching as much as 40 percent between the fourth quarter of 1973 and the second quarter of 1975.

These stagnationist trends in government deficits and private investment have resulted in a startling relative increase in the size (and importance) of the deficit component—from an average of less than 8 percent of private investment in the years 1971-1974 to a startling 39 percent in the recession year 1975, falling only to 25 percent in the recovery of the first half of 1976. And even with this enormous increase in the government stimulus—provided, ironically, by a fiscally conservative Republican administration—there has been no significant reduction in unemployment, which by official count has remained well above 7 percent of the labor force through recession and recovery (and which at the moment of writing in December 1976 has risen above 8 percent for the first time in a year).*

Let us now look more closely at the three major components of private investment. In the short run the decisive propellent of the cycle is business investment in inventories. When consumer demand is on the upswing, factory production expands not only to meet rising sales but also to fill up the pipelines of raw materials, components, and wholesale and retail stocks of finished goods. In addition, businessmen expand inventories in anticipation of still further growth in consumer

* For background on the growth and persistence of unemployment, see "Capitalism and Unemployment," MONTHLY REVIEW (June 1975).

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demand. Capitalism, however, puts narrow limits on the growth of consumer incomes, and the market soon proves that the pace of production is excessive. Capitalists then seek to protect their profits and reduce their risks by cutting back on production and laying off workers. This, normally occurring in a broad spectrum of industries at about the same time, triggers a general decline which in turn becomes self-reinforcing. Inventories which until recently had seemed too small now appear to be excessive. They are sold off and not replaced, resulting in a still further cutback in production. (Statistically, this is reflected in a *negative* rate of inventory investment.) But this downward movement is also self-limiting. Provided there are no additional factors depressing demand, the cycle begins over again: production expands first to satisfy existing markets, then to rebuild inventories; employment and income rise; sales increase; and the business world is back on the road to overproduction.

What has just been described is generally known as the "inventory cycle," and it operates in good times and bad—during the 1930s as well as during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. But it tells us nothing about the forces which determine whether the economy is buoyant or stagnant, nor more particularly about the probability of its being able to provide jobs for a growing labor force. To understand these crucially important matters, we need to examine some more basic aspects of capitalist society and its mode of operation.

Capitalists' total receipts from sales can be divided into three parts: the wage bill which is spent by workers on consumer goods; depreciation intended for the replacement of worn-out or obsolete machinery (and other capital goods); and "surplus" to be distributed to members of the capitalist class and their lieutenants in the form of profits, interest, rent, and (often enormous) salaries. The surplus is much more than its recipients can or want to spend on consumer goods, so the remainder (plus what is set aside as depreciation) must be invested if the whole economy is to keep running smoothly. And the kind of investment which is required here is not in the inherently unstable field of inventories but rather in the other two categories of private investment, residential construction and plant and equipment, which are the essential growth elements

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in a capitalist economy. Without the full use of the surplus for investment of this kind, stagnation becomes the order of the day: built-up capacity cannot be fully utilized on a profitable basis; unemployment grows since there are no jobs for new entrants to the labor market and those displaced by advancing technology; slumps tend to be more severe and recoveries to be sluggish.

TABLE 3
Business Investment
(Seasonally adjusted totals at annual rates, in billions of 1972 dollars)

	Change in Business Inventories	Residential Construction	Non-residential Plant and Equipment
1974			
I	+12.4	49.1	134.5
II	+ 6.8	47.1	129.9
III	+ 4.2	44.1	125.0
IV	+ 7.6	38.5	120.8
1975			
I	–20.5	35.4	114.4
II	–21.2	36.8	110.6
III	– 1.0	39.6	110.1
IV	– 5.5	41.9	110.5
1976			
I	+10.4	44.1	112.6
II	+11.1	45.7	114.9
III	+ 9.9	46.9	117.0

SOURCE: Same as Table 1.

Now it is weakness in precisely these decisive investment fields that characterizes the present economic situation. As far as the inventory cycle is concerned, it has been going through its paces as expected (Table 3). Note that column 1 of Table 3 depicts *changes* in inventory holdings from quarter to quarter, not total investment as in the other two columns. A minus sign in column 1 means that a decline in inventory has taken place, while a plus indicates additions. As is evident from Table 3, the inventory pipeline was still being filled up during 1974. In 1975, on the other hand, production was curtailed and inventories were sold off in each quarter of that year. A pick-up in business in 1976, in turn, was pushed further along by a

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fairly quick rebuilding of stocks. But while the general contours of this cyclical behavior resemble that of preceding recessions, there was a major difference this time in that the recovery was helped along by unusual stimulation from both government and business. First, there was the extraordinary spur provided by the tax cuts and other special government measures in early 1975: steps that produced (as seen in Table 4, page 12) a deficit in the second quarter which amounted at an annual rate to almost $100 billion. Even this was not enough to get rid of the enormous backlog of cars in the hands of dealers and to pave the way for a recovery in auto production. In this situation, auto manufacturers, banks, and finance companies went all out by stretching credit to unheard-of limits, ignoring entirely the impact these practices might have in depressing auto markets in future years. Read, for example, how the *Wall Street Journal* described this development:

> In a sharp departure from auto financing practices of the past two decades, you can buy a new car at a growing number of places these days without putting so much as a penny down. Becoming almost as common are terms requiring less than 10 percent down. In both cases, monthly payments often are comfortably below $100.
>
> But there's one catch: those low payments are made possible only by stretching out the length of the loan, from a couple of years in the good old days, to four—and sometimes even five—years now. . . . From the mid-1950s until a few years ago, even the most creditworthy auto buyers generally were limited to financing no more than 80 percent of a car's retail price and to terms no longer than 36 months. As recently as September 1974, government figures show, only about 10 percent of new-car loans by major finance companies were for longer than 36 months. But just a year later, fully one quarter of the new-car loans by these lenders were exceeding this traditional maximum. (January 8, 1976)

Yet despite these props to retail sales and the consequent fairly rapid turnaround in the inventory cycle, the other types of business investment have been unable to get back to previous peaks, let alone surpass them as would be necessary for this type of business investment to have a significant impact on unemployment.

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In the case of residential construction, it should be recognized that this industry had been in a critical condition for some time before the recent recession. The postwar peak in home-building was reached in 1972, when $62 billion were invested in this field. Since then activity dropped 43 percent to a low point of $35.4 billion in the first quarter of 1975. Ironically, this precipitous drop, starting in the midst of a cyclical upswing, was itself triggered by the prosperity it helped to create. The latter, sustained by a wave of credit expansion, produced such a tightness in the availability of mortgage money and such high interest rates that the housing market was strangled. And since the onset of the recession was accompanied by a loosening of mortgage money and a drop in interest rates, the construction industry began to turn around at an early stage in the recession. Helping along was the backlog in demand for housing that accumulated during the years of sharply declining construction. Yet despite the more favorable financial conditions and the potential demand, the recovery was slow. By the third quarter of 1976, construction activity was still only about 75 percent of the former high.

Aware of the infirmities of the home-building field and the limitations of an upswing stemming mainly from the inventory factor, bourgeois economists and government policy-makers have been pinning their hopes for a durable recovery on investment in additional productive capacity—a development that it was hoped would be strong enough to allay some of the more serious social problems (mass unemployment, the financial crisis of the cities, etc.) besetting the country. So far, however, the recovery of investment for replacement, modernization, and capacity expansion has been far from encouraging, as noted in the quotation from *Business Week* on page one above. Instead of fueling the recovery by energetic growth programs, the business community has been dragging its feet. As can be seen from the third column of Table 3, investment in plant and equipment advanced barely 6 percent in a full year of recovery (from the third quarter of 1975 to the third quarter of 1976); even at that it was still 13 percent below the preceding peak reached in the first quarter of 1974.

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This loss of vitality is, in reality, far from a new development. The special underlying forces that sustained the long postwar expansion have been petering out for at least a decade now. This process, however, has been masked by extremes of speculation and credit creation that, along with a resultant speed-up in inflation, helped push up production to beyond limits which would normally have been set by available consumer incomes. In the nature of the case, such artificial stimulation could be no more than a temporary palliative. Sooner or later the credit bubble bursts and leads to serious business contractions and failures.* Considering the shaky foundations of the most recent economic expansions, it is little wonder that business firms are exceptionally cautious in their investment policies.**

Despite much interested propaganda to the contrary, one thing is eminently clear: the slowness of the recovery of investment in plant and equipment has not been due to any shortage of money. For one of the outstanding features of the present cycle has been a substantial improvement in corporate finances in the midst of, and in spite of, the recession. In this respect, Table 4 tells an interesting and instructive story. The first column shows the quarterly growth of the federal deficit. The second column presents the corporate surplus in each of the

* For analysis of the role of credit expansion and its limits, see the following MONTHLY REVIEW articles: "Keynesian Chickens Come Home to Roost" (April 1974); "Banks: Skating on Thin Ice" (February 1975); and "Capital Shortage: Fact and Fancy" (April 1976).

** There are also fundamental historical forces at work here which cannot be dealt with in a brief analysis. Of particular relevance is the slowdown in the suburbanization of the population with a consequent reduction or cessation in the demand for a great variety of goods and services (highways, streets, utilities, schools, hospitals, stores, etc.). The fact that similar or comparable goods and services are urgently *needed* in decaying city centers is unfortunately entirely unrelated to the question of profitable investment opportunities. This whole issue of the historical climate for private investment has been almost totally ignored by the economic pundits and forecasters. Some businessmen have been more perceptive: see, e.g., the excellent piece, "The Capital Shortage—A False Alarm," by Robert S. Wall, a New York investment counsellor, in the Sunday financial section of the *New York Times* (November 7, 1976).

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same quarters (pre-tax profits plus depreciation reserves).* (The quarterly data are expressed in annual rates for ease in comparison with annual totals.) Two aspects of the corporate

TABLE 4

	Federal Government Deficit	Corporate Surplus (Profits before taxes plus depreciation reserves)
	Billions of $, quarterly data at annual rates, seasonally adjusted	
1974		
I	5.3	162.8
II	7.9	165.6
III	8.0	162.7
IV	25.5	158.1
1975		
I	49.8	158.5
II	99.9	179.5
III	66.0	201.9
IV	69.4	205.6
1976		
I	63.8	216.2
II	54.1	221.2

SOURCE: Same as Table 1.

surplus series are particularly striking. Note first that a decline in the surplus took place only in the earliest stage of the recession, and even then was minimal: 3 percent between the first and fourth quarters of 1974. After that, during the severest postwar recession, the corporate surplus kept on rising—jumping 30 percent between the low point in the last quarter of 1974 and the last quarter of 1975, and continuing to move ahead into 1976. In effect, what has been happening is that the federal deficit ended up finally in the coffers of the corporations: the increase in the deficit between the fourth quarters of 1974 and 1975 amounted to almost $44 billion (from $25.5

* These data are based on new revisions made by the Commerce Department in the gross national product and national income accounts. At the time of writing, comparable data on corporate income taxes are not yet available. A more accurate picture of corporate funds available for investment would of course need an adjustment for corporate tax obligations. We believe, however, that the unadjusted figures shown in Table 4 are significant in showing the main trend.

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to $69.4 billion), while the corporate surplus rose by almost $48 billion (from $158.1 to $205.6 billion). This very close coincidence is of course in part a statistical fluke. But behind it lies a significant aspect of the present U.S. economy, as well described by Professor V Lewis Bassie:

> There is an increasingly marked tendency for gross corporate saving to recover strongly as the federal deficit mounts. Deficits appear to be largely and ever more quickly absorbed into corporate surpluses. Part of this is intended; it comes from tax cuts and higher investment allowances. Even more it derives from the price system, which acts as a transfer system to benefit those whose power to raise prices is unrestricted. This helps to explain why inflation and recession go together.*

If these swollen funds are not fueling a substantial rise in investment, what are they being used for? The answer to this question summarizes, in a sense, the entire business scene in a period of stagnation. Industrial firms and financial institutions have been growing by blowing up the debt balloon, stretching it almost to the bursting point. The slowdown during the recession and the growth in the corporate surplus have enabled the larger corporations to get their financial affairs in better order: bank loans have been repaid, short-term debt converted into long-term debt, and cash reserves set aside for working capital. This has resulted in a definite improvement in corporate liquidity.**

This is naturally a comfort and a solace to the corporations and their functionaries, stockholders, and dependents. But in a climate of creeping stagnation it is hardly a message of cheer to the unemployed, the vast majority of workers whose real incomes have been contracting for several years now, the

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* V Lewis Bassie, "Fiscal Policy Without Controls," *Illinois Business Review* (December 1975). Bassie, who was the first one to make the comparison between corporate surplus and the deficit, discusses the issue in a further article "Cyclical Effects of Deficit Spending," in the same journal (February 1976).

** The counterpart of course has been a huge increase in the federal debt—from $486 billion on July 1, 1974, to $648 billion on July 1, 1976, i.e., an increase of one third in only two years. What has been happening on an unprecedented scale, in other words, is a shift of part of the debt burden from the corporate (private) sector to the government (public) sector.

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crisis-ridden cities and their harried officials, the millions of others who (because of old age, bad health, or insecure jobs) live on the brink of disaster in this richest of all countries. Capital accumulation is the key to the performance of every capitalist economy, and this depends not on the availability of money or credit but on the existence of profitable opportunities to invest.

In the past, new waves of such profitable opportunities appeared from time to time, and it certainly cannot be precluded that this will happen again. As the saying goes, hope springs eternal. But it might make more sense to begin seriously to think about replacing a system which depends entirely on the profits of the rich by one which does away with profits altogether and operates solely with a view to meeting the real needs of ordinary people. It is not a new idea, but the crazy situation in which we now find ourselves suggests that maybe it is an idea whose time has come.

(December 10, 1976)

Overwhelming Evidence

A multinational corporation, no matter how large, is essentially helpless in the hands of a nation-state, no matter how small. Despite overwhelming evidence of this truism, investigations abound. The Group of Eminent Persons appointed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1972, at the instigation of the then-communist government of Chile, started an investigation of the relative powers of multinational companies and nation-states. It is not now, nor has ever been, a contest. I can give them one example right next door to the UN headquarters in New York, where I happen to live. New York, as you may know, is a hard place to park an automobile. Members of the missions assigned to the UN enjoy diplomatic immunity. They can, if they choose, ignore the No Parking signs—which many of them do, to the constant irritation of less privileged New Yorkers. If I park my own car in the neighborhood, the Police Department tows it away. And the head of every global company is in the same fix . . . some of the reports that were turned out by the Group of Eminent Persons [were done by persons] who parked their cars outside the UN building, in clear defiance of local laws.

—Walter Wriston,
Chairman of First National City Bank
London, September 15, 1976

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ENGELS VINDICATED

BY DONALD D. WEISS

We have, in recent times, come more clearly to understand that *Marxian analysis is cultural analysis.* The importance of this formulation is that once Marxism is explicitly conceived as a theory concerning the production and distribution of *culture*, it becomes quite impossible to treat the ideational aspect of human history as it was treated by the older "economistic" orthodoxy: as if it were some merely passive dimension riding piggy-back upon an essentially non-ideational "base" of society, the latter "material foundation" being something over which human conscious activity can have no truly decisive influence. We have thus been enabled also to understand that Marx's interest in the economic metabolism of society was rooted in his conviction that this is the way in which the interchange of *the products of human creativity* is to be most adequately studied. It has, in short, become clear to many of us that Marxism is essentially hostile to any *reductionistic* attempt to dispense with the categories peculiarly appropriate to

Donald D. Weiss teaches philosophy at the State University of New York at Binghamton. This essay is a shorter version of a theme argued in "Toward a Vindication of Friedrich Engels," forthcoming in *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science.* It was written with the aid of the Louis M. Rabinowitz Foundation and the Research Foundation of the State University of New York.

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those beings that consciously create the conditions of their own existence.

The modern revolt against the reductionism of the older orthodoxy is by now well advanced. But while this revolt is, as I have just suggested, itself quite laudable, it has nonetheless created some rather unfortunate confusions of its own. It has, in many quarters, created the erroneous impression that it was the influence of Friedrich Engels's explicit materialism that was largely to blame for the prevalence of reductionism among Marxists. It has, for the same reasons, fostered the mistaken belief that Engels's philosophical viewpoint was essentially different from Marx's. And it has, in the process, severely muddled our understanding of the very notion of materialism. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the dissolution of these anti-Engels confusions.

The Case Against Engels

The critics of Engels typically observe that it was he who maintained that consciousness is but the "highest product of matter." And they argue that it was this conception that led him, as contrasted with Marx, to a preoccupation with entirely nonconscious factors. Marx himself, these interpreters argue, was not—strictly speaking—a materialist at all. That Marx sometimes *called* himself a materialist is not denied. But it is nonetheless insisted that "materialism" meant something else for Marx than what it is typically taken to mean; and thus that it would be more accurate to use one of the other terms that Marx occasionally used, in order to characterize his fundamental philosophical position—"naturalism" or "humanism." For it is clear that Marx does reserve an irreducible role for conscious activity, as contrasted with purely "material factors," in human life and hence in history. To mention one obvious example: for Marx, the nature of human discontent cannot correctly be conceived in purely materialistic categories, since all truly human discontent is a response to the *alienation of creativity* from people's lives. Thus, not wishing to deny the importance of this *ideal* aspect of things, Marx called himself a "materialist" only so as to indicate that Hegel and other (putatively thoroughgoing) "idealists" went wrong by *excluding* material factors

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from their historical interpretations. Engels, on the other hand, so the argument runs, is a full-blooded, dyed-in-the-wool materialist, a monist who preaches that all the world is reducible to the very same brute stuff; his approach must therefore be considered basically at variance with Marx's. Moreover, since Engels erringly imported materialism into the human-social domain, and since materialism is incompatible with an insistence on the importance of consciousness in history, it is Engels who is partially responsible for the vicious tendency to consider history as being impelled by a necessity over which we (who participate in the process) have no conscious control, a tendency which has plagued much of the Marxist movement by substituting sanguine expectations for what was really needed: decisive action to capture the hearts and minds of the people.

Variants of this viewpoint have been defended by Lukács, Lichtheim, Avineri, Dupré, Tucker, Z. A. Jordan, and others.[1]* The following passage is quite representative:

> [U]nder the influence of Engels, an entire generation of Social Democrats had imbibed the doctrines that (a) there is nothing in the universe but matter; (b) therefore man is material, i.e., a collection of atoms and molecules which are in motion solely in accordance with the laws of physics; (c) therefore man is not and could never become free; and (d) since capitalism will collapse anyway, we socialist politicians shall await that event, await the reins of government falling into our hands. . . .[2]

But, despite its widespread appeal, this orientation is entirely confused. Engels not only is *not* a reductionist; his general orientation has, moreover, a profound affinity with that of Marx. My argument in defense of Engels will fall into three parts. In the first part of the argument, to be presented in the next section, I will show that Engels's philosophy—far from being a *reductionist* view that by its nature excludes the factor of "consciousness"—is to the contrary the only philosophical framework within which essentially antireductionist attitudes can be presented in a manner that does not violate the materialist presuppositions of modern science. In the second stage of the argument, which will occupy the third section, I will

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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argue that the full significance of Marx's own theory of history cannot be understood except as based upon the Engelsian variant of materialism. To jettison Engels is to abandon the philosophical groundwork of Marxism. Finally, in the last section, I will briefly indicate why an insistence on the materialist character of Marxism is not merely of intellectual interest, but rather has significant *practical* import.

The Importance of Engels's Developmental Materialism

Much of the misunderstanding of Engels is due to one very simple source: a failure to understand what a commitment to "materialism" does and does not involve. It is, in particular, wrong to assume that a commitment to *materialism* implies a commitment to *reductionism*: this assumption is founded on a conceptual muddle.

Materialism is the doctrine which asserts that everything is made up of what we may call "natural substances," i.e., that all existents—including those peculiar categories of existents, entities that live and entities that think—are ultimately made up of the very same sorts of material constituents: protons, electrons, and so forth. No doubt the differences between those things that are alive and those that are not, and between those that are conscious and those that are not, are striking indeed. But the materialist nonetheless maintains that the theoretical apparatus peculiarly appropriate to living or mental phenomena is only an appropriate response to a particular manner in which entirely "natural" substances happen to be organized. Thus, when these substances are arranged in a particular way, we have what is called a stone; when arranged in another way, an oak tree; when arranged yet otherwise, a well-functioning—and that is also to say *thinking*—human being. Materialists deny, for example, that there is a mysterious something (a "spirit" or "soul") that must be superadded to natural constituents of the human organism in order for life or consciousness to exist.

Reductionism, on the other hand, is the thesis that the categories applicable to one mode of material organization (e.g., to conscious entities) are ultimately the same as those appro-

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riate to other (eg., *non*conscious) material forms. If, for example, physics is—as no doubt it is—adequate for the study of micro-particles (protons, electrons, etc.) when these are *not* complexly organized, then—the reductionist asserts—physics is in principle adequate for the study of any complex of micro-particles whatever. The reductionist denies, in other words, that the varying ways in which the material constituents of things are *organized* may imply any qualitative difference with respect to the basic characteristics or modes of activity of these various complexes.

Reductionism is one possible materialist view. But notice, now, that it follows from our definitions that another materialist variant is possible: one which maintains that differing modes of material organization do imply qualitative differences among the respective material complexes. *The anti-reductionist materialist* would be one who maintained that all of reality is made up of nothing but "natural substances," but who also believed that reductionism is wrong in denying that differing constellations of such substances require, at least sometimes, differing basic terms and/or laws if their properties, states, and activities are to be correctly characterized.

Thus, though it is unquestionable that Engels was a materialist, this by itself does not imply any commitment to reductionism. And here indeed we reach the central irony: that *Engels himself explicitly argued in defense of an anti-reductionist materialism.* His insistence upon the "dialectical" character of material reality is nothing less than the insistence that such reality is irreducibly developmental; that, as Engels (following Hegel) puts it, "quantitative" changes in things in time give rise to "qualitatively" new sorts of things. Engels maintains that the material organization of the world is constantly changing, and that, with new forms of material organization, there arise, correspondingly, novel properties and regularities. Thus, from the fact that a science S_1 is able to deal with entities a and b when the latter exist in isolation from one another, it does not follow that S_1 will be adequate when a and b combine in a particular way to constitute the complex substance aRb; for there may be characteristics and modes of behavior nonexistent before the advent of aRb which are brought

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about in virtue of aRb's coming into existence. To put this point in terms quite familiar to the Anglo-American philosopher: when a and b combine to form aRb, there may be, and there sometimes are, *emergent* properties and regularities, novelties necessitating a more complex science, S_2, if they are to be comprehended. Accordingly, any variant of materialism which does not recognize that highly evolved systems (e.g., human beings) are characterized by "higher laws" than those characteristic of less complex systems (e.g., mechanical devices) is —Engels believes—bound to be inadequate. Thus, for example, mechanism (the Enlightenment brand of physicalist reductionism) is rejected in terms which make his general anti-reductionist orientation absolutely clear:

> What the animal was to Descartes, man was to the materialists of the eighteenth century—a machine. This exclusive application of the standards of mechanics to processes of a chemical and organic nature—in which processes the laws of mechanics are, indeed, also valid, but are pushed into the background by other, higher laws—constitutes the first specific but at that time inevitable limitation of classical French materialism.[3]

We may also consider a passage which specifically bespeaks Engels's hostility toward the very notion that his critics often accuse him of maintaining—i.e., that a reduction of *mental* phenomena might conceivably be achieved. Calling "the craze to reduce [Engels actually does use the term *reduzieren*] everything to mechanical motion" a position based upon a "misunderstanding," he proceeds:

> This is not to say that each of the higher forms of motion is not always necessarily connected with . . . mechanical . . . motion, just as the higher forms of motion simultaneously also produce other forms; chemical action is not possible without change of temperature and electric changes, organic life without mechanical, molecular, chemical, thermal, electric, changes, etc. *But the presence of these subsidiary forms does not exhaust the essence of the main form in each case. One day we shall certainly "reduce" thought experimentally to molecular and chemical motions in the brain; but does that exhaust the essence of thought?* (Emphasis added.)[4]

So ends the passage; the supposition that thought can be

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adequately treated by means of the categories of natural science alone is dismissed with a scornfully rhetorical question. And the "scare-quotes" around the word "reduce" are, *nota bene*, Engels's own. And if he himself does not make this point with noonday clarity, we may paraphrase him thus: "That mental processes are molecular and chemical motions in the brain is a point that must be insisted upon; it is unnecessary to complicate our ontology by the addition of some sort of soulish substance. If that is all you mean by 'reduce,' then 'reduction' is possible. But if this word is used as it typically is, to imply the superfluousness of specifically mental categories, then 'reduction' is obviously *not* possible."

The mistaken identification of materialism with reductionism is responsible not only for the fallacious inference *from* the fact that Engels was a materialist *to* the (flatly erroneous) conclusion that he "therefore" was a reductionist; it is also no doubt responsible for the equally fallacious inference *from* the (correct) observation that Marx was not a reductionist *to* the (erroneous) conclusion that he "therefore" could not have been, like Engels, a materialist. But an even more objectionable implication of this materialist-reductionist identification must now be noticed. For *once this false identification is coupled with an (in itself laudable) hostility to reductionism, the result is inevitably the rejection of materialism itself.* And this result is unfortunate indeed. For in fact *modern science is materialist science.*

I am not asking the reader mainly to consider the implications of recent achievements in biochemistry and cybernetics. For it is possible for one still to have reason to doubt, despite these accomplishments, that we will actually succeed in synthesizing living things "in a test-tube," or in constructing something that, beyond any question, really does think. It is perhaps more important to understand that the modern doctrine of the *evolution* of all entities, including living and thinking entities, by means of more and more complex integrations of natural substances, is a doctrine which no serious scientist would today find it reasonable to doubt. Whether or not human beings can construct living and thinking entities, what

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is *not* seriously dubitable is the proposition that all forms of life —including that species of which Shakespeare, Newton, and G.W.F. Hegel have been members—did evolve from more primitive forms of life; that the most primitive forms of life developed, in turn, from a series of combinations of initially nonliving chemicals; and that this whole process occurred within the scope of some three or four billion years. It of course would not make any difference (for *our* purposes at any rate) if the correct figure turned out to be five billion years; the point in principle is clear: modern science is committed to the proposition that living and thinking entities are in principle synthesizable from nonliving entities—*precisely because modern science has reached the conclusion that such entities were, in the actual course of natural history, so synthesized.* Thus, even if our species does not itself succeed in creating living and thinking things, this will only mean that we are for some reason unable to get the knack of doing what nature itself has already done. (We have the advantage over "blind" nature of being quite intelligent; but nature has the advantage of having had an awful lot of time.)

It follows also that those who attempt to dissociate Marx from Engels over the issues of "materialism" quite plainly do the former the disservice of setting him at odds with the Darwinian achievement which broke upon the scene in the very midst of Marx's own career—an achievement whose implications banished, thenceforward, all *non*materialist accounts of life, and of human life, from the halls of science.

In sum: Engels's critics, working from a quite understandable *anti-reductionist* perspective, reject his theory because it is a *materialism*. This not only involves a fundamental confusion, since these are two entirely distinct issues; even worse, it leads to a rejection of what is, as we have seen, a fundamental presupposition of modern science. The only way for these critics to avert such a disaster is for them to espouse a position which is *both* materialistic *and* anti-reductionist. But if they do this, they will find themselves driven into the arms of a doctrine which had long ago already been embraced by no other personage than—Friedrich Engels.

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The Essential Affinity of Engels and Marx

Engels's critics must, however, be subjected to counter-attack on an even deeper level. For it can be shown that the most fundamental aspects of the materialist conception of history, a doctrine with which Marx's name is associated even more strongly than that of Engels, cannot be grasped except on the basis of the sort of anti-reductionist materialism propounded by the latter.

Let us begin with some simple facts. First, there is no lack of passages in which Marx is, to all appearances, defending just the same sort of conjuncture of materialism and anti-reductionism which Engels stressed—e.g., in the *Theses on Feuerbach,* as well as a well-known passage in *The Holy Family* in which Marx favors the "all-sided" materialism of Francis Bacon as against the "mechanical" materialism of Hobbes.[5] Secondly, it is known that Marx went over, and explicitly endorsed, the contents of *Anti-Dühring*—the latter being the *locus classicus* of Engels's own materialist philosophy.[6]

But, lest one suspect that this apparent affinity between Marx and Engels is only verbal, it can, in addition, be rather easily shown that the basic *social* orientation of classical Marxism—Marx's own distinct accomplishment—presupposes much the same sort of anti-reductionist materialism as that elucidated by Engels. It must, in particular, be stressed that "*historical materialism" is literally and unambiguously a form of materialism.* Consideration of this point will permit the final refutation of Engels's anti-materialist critics.

The essential point is that the Marxian emphasis upon the factors of *production* would be incomprehensible—or at least would appear to be entirely arbitrary—were it not part of a quite general theoretical position according to which the development of the human powers must be viewed in the context of the development of *material culture.* The *differentia specifica* of the human species is our ability—an ability which is added to each successive historical stage—to modify our talents, and hence our needs, through the production of useful *objects,* or artifacts. The development of the human powers, of the totality of human culture, must be considered

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a process whereby human beings become ever more able to assimilate purposefully the material environment, to transform "brute nature" into rational-intentional forms. Human culture has advanced insofar as the members of our species have literally extended their sensory-motor wherewithal, by making what was at one time *mere* nature into instruments wherein new sensory-motor talents can now be exercised.

In the (historically) first instance, the human powers were delimited by the equipment that belongs to the human body: sense organs, fingers, etc. Such powers were not, of course, insignificant; but insofar as the members of our species were restricted to such a meager physical means of interacting with their environment, their talents clearly could not be significantly more impressive than those of "the lower animals." For, confined to his natural body, a person has minimal *control over* his world, and hence also cannot *understand* it beyond what is —in comparison with the culture we have in fact historically created—the paltriest of levels. Only, that is, by overcoming the purely "objective existence" of nature, by transforming it into physical apparatus directly subservient to our will, have we been able to subdue and to comprehend an initially hostile and mysterious environment. A pointed stick becomes a hoe: thus, and only thus, is the way opened to agriculture—and hence finally, on the more theoretical level, to botany. We learn to control fire: not merely to warm ourselves, but also, in time, to transform substances into more useful substances—this being the practical presupposition of chemistry. And so on.

The Marxian analysis of the human powers is for this reason an essentially *materialistic* one. The human "creative" abilities cannot exist, according to Marx, unless they are *realized* through the appropriation of the natural world. They cannot be realized except as *modes of organization, and hence of activity*, of the natural substances which comprise (in the first instance) the human body and (in the further, truly *historical*, instances) that body as extended by appropriated nature. If I may be permitted a heuristic metaphor: human intelligence is regarded by Marx as the ensemble of talents and abilities residing in our natural and in our *produced* "limbs."

The occurrence of the world "produced" at this juncture

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is, moreover, no accident. For it is the Marxist's understanding of the materiality of culture which enables him to appreciate the privileged theoretical role that must be accorded to the concept of *production*. Only when we understand that specifically human culture can exist only insofar as it is literally created, worked up from the raw material environment into expressions of our own agency—only then will we be able to give due appreciation to the real prerequisites of such culture. The artificial world, without which our complex sensory-motor repertoire would have no medium of existence, must constantly be produced and reproduced if our "distinction from the animal" is to *remain* a distinction. It is for this reason that *the history of the development of the human powers in general must be integrated with the study of the development of the human productive powers in particular*. And it is also for this reason that any study of the history of culture which remains unenlightened by the study of the development of the technological prerequisites of the various stages in the development of culture must be considered a correspondingly abstract culturological view.

This emphasis upon the materiality of culture is not intended as a denial of the importance of the *reflective function*. It is rather to stress that the development of material culture cannot properly be understood unless these functions are considered a phase, an aspect, of a much richer process. It is of course true that cultural advance would be inconceivable without the intellectual functions of (a) reflecting upon previous practice and (b) formulating, in light of such reflections, plans and projects for the future. Any brand of "Marxism" which lapses into denying this obvious truth may correctly be rejected as reductionist. What must rather be insisted is that all conscious activities are stringently delimited by the character of the instrumentation, relevant to those activities, which has historically been developed—this instrumentation's degree of development being itself a function of the general technical level of advance achieved by the culture in question. Advancement in *theory* therefore depends upon its "descent" into the *practical* arena—i.e., upon its contribution to the development of those material forms without which future *theorization*, on a higher

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plane, would be impossible. Theory must inevitably contribute to the production of human existence on a higher *material* plane, if it itself is not to be stultified.

Thus the fundamental fact remains that human culture is extended only by the *materialization* of new techniques, of apparatus that is so molded that new powers can have their medium of real existence; which is to say that Marxism rests upon a fundamental resistance to any conception which maintains that the human powers reside in some special substance distinct from the natural substances of which the body, and appropriated "external" nature, are composed. Any philosophical conception which posits a special spiritual substance distinct from these natural substances, and wherein human intelligence is asserted to reside—any such *dualistic* or *idealistic* conception is quite foreign to the Marxian perspective. To such a nonmaterialist view, the fundamental Marxian assertion that the existence and the furtherance of the human powers depends upon the corresponding production of material culture, i.e., that the human "spirit" develops only insofar as it is quite literally materialized, must remain a closed book. The distinctively Marxian conception of human culture and history will, in other words, be foreign to all but those who maintain that *intelligence exists only insofar as the material world has come to be intelligently organized.*

Historical materialism, thus understood, clearly does not assert that the human powers, "since they reside in the natural substances of which everything is composed," can be scientifically treated in the same way as these substances may be treated when they comprise "the external world." At no point have I depicted Marxian materialism in such a way that it appears to involve a reduction of our science of the human to the categories appropriate to the natural sciences. To the contrary, I have assumed throughout that human beings are distinguished from other entities by virtue of their "intelligence," and I have explicitly argued in this section that Marxism attributes fundamental importance to the reflective function. It insists, however, that this be treated *as* a "function," i.e., a peculiar mode of activity of what is nonetheless quite *material.*

Those interpreters of Marx who have found him *not* to be

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a reductionist are thus not at all mistaken. Indeed, such interpreters are in a certain respect worthy of our applause; for their impact, *versus* certain apparently reductionist tendencies which have paraded under Marxism's banner, has been salutary. But it should, by now, also be clear that to attack *Engels's particular variant of materialism* in the name of anti-reductionism is to make what is, from the point of view of the Marxist, as serious a blunder as any that is committed by the reductionist. For not only is materialism a fundamental aspect of the modern scientific world-view, as I argued in the preceding section; it is, just as significantly, the foundation upon which the entire Marxian edifice is built. Marxism is indeed an anti-reductionism; but the conclusion to which the present argument points is that it is an *anti-reductionism which must nonetheless be conceived in materialist terms.* It is therefore impossible to avoid the conclusion that the theoretical pivot on which the totality of Marxian theory turns is the anti-reductionist materialism which—by no coincidence whatever—Friedrich Engels did so much to elucidate and develop.

The Practical Import of the Foregoing

I have accused Engels's critics of certain theoretical distortions concerning the material character of human existence and hence of historical change. But it must now be added that the issue is not merely of *theoretical* interest. For it is clear that any theoretical distortions concerning the manner in which the present developed out of the past will imply correlative *practical* distortions concerning the manner in which the present is most effectively to be transformed into the future. This proposition is axiomatic for anyone who has learned anything at all from the study of Marx and Engels, and I will assume that it does not require argumentative buttressing here. What I now propose to do is to provide a brief characterization of the tendency of Marx and Engels to argue that those who are guilty of opposition to materialist theory may also be expected to be guilty of specifically *bourgeois practice.*

For indeed Marx and Engels do not merely *criticize* those who neglect (or distort, or underplay) the thesis of the materiality of culture. All the more radically, they utilize this thesis

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in order to explain why the thesis itself has been neglected. *Historical materialism provides us with a means of understanding why historical materialism has not, heretofore, been the dominant method of understanding sociocultural phenomena.*

The first basic consideration lying behind this Marxian understanding concerns the distinction between intellectual and manual labor. Marx and Engels maintain that the social differentiation between these two forms of activity characterizes all but the *least* and the *most* productive societies. Except in the case of either of these two extremes, the organization of society requires the establishment of a particular class which, because it is freed from activity which *immediately* and *directly* pertains to the reproduction of material culture, may engage in those more abstract, reflective tasks which are less obviously —but just as truly—promotive of such material reproduction. We find, in short, a division of society into two classes: one essentially confined to *manual,* and the other to essentially *intellectual,* functions. Now in a society of extreme primitiveness, such a division is not yet possible: society has not yet generated enough of a surplus (above subsistence) to support a stratum freed from the exigencies of direct toil. In a society of extreme productive potency, on the other hand, it becomes possible, or indeed essential, for the narrowness of function implied in this material/mental division to be *overcome*: not only can society now *afford* the all-round education of all of its members; such universal all-round education becomes, moreover, essential to the rational administration of highly advanced industrial society. *Class divisions* accordingly characterize the enormous epoch lying between extreme social poverty, on the one hand, and extreme social plenty, i.e., communism, on the other.

The second basic Marxian consideration is this: the consciousness of people is an expression of those actual skills which they have mastered—and that is to say of those particular functions they have been trained to fulfill. Each particular function will—just because it is a particular function—therefore imply the development of certain talents for dealing with reality, at the expense of the development of certain other talents. The differences in people's thoughts and values are accordingly conceived to be a function of the practical differences which char-

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acterize their productive lives. A botanist and a butcher may look at the same flower, but it is clear that their experiences of it—the actual features of it which they are, respectively, able to discriminate and appreciate—will be radically different.

Once these two basic considerations are taken together, it would appear impossible to avoid the conclusion that *the systematic inability fully to understand the materiality of society's reproduction cycle must be traced to the underdevelopment of directly material talents—and hence ideas and values—in those that are characterized by that inability.* And this is the conclusion that Marx and Engels explicitly draw. They maintain that once the material/mental division of labor comes upon the historical scene, "consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice . . . ; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and proceed to formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."[7] They thus suggest that the tendency to view intellectual activity as having a development independent of the development of material productive forces is the occupational malady of those whose primary task within the social production process is to concentrate on the intellectual phase of this process; it is an aspect of the ideology of the privileged stratum of a society.

Now if the development of a non-materialist bias is to be attributed to the particular function of society's dominant class, it is difficult to escape the extremely ironical conclusion that those who are unable to consider Marx a materialist—i.e., who, to varying degrees, depict him as a defender of the "spirit" against the crude encroachments of Engelsian matter—are reading Marx with a distinctively ruling-class bias. At the very least it may be said that such interpreters have not taken to heart one of Marx's own most important claims: that the failure to grasp human history as being, most fundamentally, the development of the material creativity of our species, is a failure to be expected of precisely those whose active lives involve only indirect exposure to the day-to-day process of production and reproduction of the all-too-material human world. It is thus a failure to be expected of those who have not themselves directly experienced the fundamentality of what we

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ordinarily call *labor*. For this reason, serious Marxists must take Marx and Engels at face value when they assert that the *materialist conception of history is the theoretical bias peculiarly appropriate to the laboring class of society.*

It is in this sense that self-critical Marxists must beware of compromising the thesis of the materiality of culture. The revolutionary character of Marxism would (despite all good intentions to the contrary) otherwise be at least seriously undermined; for this revolutionary character is itself rooted in the experiences and interests of those who know only too well how dependent upon the manipulation of "matter" our civilization is. Here, as elsewhere, we must face up to the problem of the *infusion of bourgeois ideas into Marxian theory itself*. If this problem is not addressed squarely, the danger exists that we will remain under the mystifying influence of the class-stratified social system that we professedly are attempting to transcend. A firm insistence upon the materialist character of Marxism, on the other hand, constitutes an essential aspect of the overcoming of such mystification, and thus inevitably contributes to practical self-understanding on the part of those who participate in the Marxian historical movement. It is for this reason that the vindication of the thoroughgoing yet subtle materialism of Friedrich Engels is of more than merely theoretical importance.

NOTES

1. George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 3; George Lichtheim, *Marxism* (New York, 1961), pp. 244 ff.; Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1968), e.g., p. 58; Louis Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism* (New York, 1966), p. 142; Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 184; Z. A. Jordan, *The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism* (New York, 1967), *passim*.
2. F. L. Bender, *The Betrayal of Marx* (New York, 1975), pp. 41-42.
3. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1962), vol. 2, p. 373.
4. F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature* (New York, 1940), pp. 174-175.
5. The reader will need no help in locating the *Theses*. *The Holy Family* excerpt may be found in L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat (eds.), *Writings of the Young Marx, etc.* (Garden City, 1967), p. 391. The emphasis is Marx's.
6. See Engels's 1885 Preface to *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow, 1954), pp. 14-15.
7. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (pt. 1, New York, 1970), pp. 51-52.

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THE 1975 STUDENT STRUGGLE AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

BY MARK D. MATTHEWS

The following article was written by a student participant soon after the events it describes. However, by the time it was ready for the printer, around the beginning of the 1975-1976 academic year, it seemed to us that the situation on most campuses was such as to minimize interest in struggles of the kind that took place at Brown the previous spring, and we decided to hold up publication until we judged the article would meet with a more interested reception. Recent developments, especially in the New York City system of higher education, and mounting financial difficulties at most universities, both public and private, have convinced us that that time has now come. Either students will sit back and passively allow university administrations, controlled as they are by ruling-class-dominated boards of trustees and corporations, to "solve" the problems of higher education according to their own interests and priorities; or students will actively intervene and struggle to impose solutions, or at least compromises, which take account of what they perceive to be *their* interests and priorities. Those who choose to follow this second course can learn a great deal from what happened at Brown during the early months of 1975.

The aftermath of the 1975 events is not a part of Mark

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Matthews' story, and our information is not enough to allow more than the very general comment that the Brown administration has obviously been less than enthusiastic in implementing the agreement reached at that time, while the student groups which were in the vanguard of the struggle have tended to assume too easily that their victory was secure. The lesson bids fair to be that of all class struggles, that gains are never won once and for all, but must be fought for again and again if they are to be held onto.

—THE EDITORS

Brown University has been characterized recently by student unrest. This comes as a surprise to many, Brown being a conservative school designed to train the sons and daughters of the ruling class and those who aspire to enter the higher echelons of the social division of labor. I believe nevertheless that the unrest is not the result of outside stimuli, as some have charged, but of the necessity of students to strike out against the bureaucratic apparatus that controls the university.

The movement of students centers around proposed increases in the costs of tuition and simultaneous cuts in student services. The proposed budget places greater financial burden on students in general, and black students in particular. In essence, it is an attempt to prevent the matriculation of students from working-class backgrounds.

Once the proposed budget became known, in February 1975, black students were faced with a critical question: whether action against budget cuts could be taken, and if so what form the action should take. At this point, the leaders of the Organization of United African Peoples (OUAP)—the black student union—decided that they did not have the mass support among black students needed to carry out a direct confrontation with the university. Under the circumstances and despite the fact that the history of negotiation with the university had been both fruitless and demoralizing, the OUAP felt that it had no choice other than to continue on the same course.

At the same time dissatisfaction was increasing among

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white students, in response to increases in tuition and cutbacks in faculty, financial aid, and student services. White students took the step of forming a student coalition to fight the university's proposed budget.

As the coalition began to build momentum, it sought to incorporate the demands of OUAP within its programs. The OUAP joined the student coalition, but on condition that it be allowed its independence within the coalition. The OUAP joined the coalition not because it lacked mass support for a direct confrontation with the university, but on the principled ground that the main contradiction at the university was not between blacks and whites, but between the university administration (and corporation) and students.

In a newsletter explaining OUAP's reasons for joining the student coalition, four points were stressed:

(1) The demands of black students imply some measure of student control. "The fundamental problem is one of the university attempting to dictate every aspect of student life. . . . *As the university centers around students, it should serve the needs of students. However, to the contrary, the university has maintained a policy of manipulating students to serve the ends of the university.* Demands for supportive services, retention of faculty administrators, Afro-American studies, and a sizable black community can only be exercised by some measure of student control."

(2) "The student coalition has backed white students in motion behind demands that also affect blacks—i.e., financial aid, tenure, retention of faculty, etc. There is a need to coordinate the energies of white and black students instead of playing the two off against each other."

(3) "Access to all budgetary information is necessary to secure, protect, and project black demands. This specifically is a demand that can only be met by the assertion of all students."

(4) "The existing pressures are the result of students attempting to cope with their environment. Pressures of classes, study, social life, etc., are enormous. This is compounded because students are simultaneously struggling to assert some type of control over their existence."

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In summing up its position, the newsletter stated: "*We cannot deny that black demands have a significance in and of themselves; however, black students are an integral component of the university. As such, our demands fall into the larger realm of student demands. Yet, we must make it clear that in no way will we let our demands be subsumed by the coalition. FURTHERMORE, WE ARE PREPARED TO PRESENT OUR DEMANDS INDEPENDENTLY OF THE COALITION IF FORCED TO DO SO.*"

The student coalition established a timetable to prepare students for some type of action against the university. At the same time they developed the idea of creating a student and faculty committee to present to the corporation an alternative budget to that of Mr. Hornig, the President of Brown University.

On March 14, members of the corporation were to meet at the university. In response to this the student coalition organized a rally, the purpose of which was to ensure student support for a committee of students that would formulate an alternative budget. The rally drew nearly 3,000 students. The corporation agreed to allow students to present an alternative budget, as well as to have access to all budgetary information used in formulating Hornig's budget.

The decision of the corporation was viewed as a victory by many students. In fact, it was a clever move by the corporation to attempt to placate student discontent. The agreement made the corporation appear to side with the students. It also made it look as though the antagonist in the student struggle were the administration, *not* the corporation. This was a successful attempt to give the illusion that the administration and corporation were two separate entities, when in reality the administration is merely the arm of the corporation designed to implement corporation policies. Secondly, the agreement gave students no assurance that the corporation would recognize or accept the students' budget. What the corporation was attempting to do was to quell student unrest and draw out the process until April 19—when the A&E (budgetary) committee of the corporation was to meet to approve the budget—hoping that over the intervening period of time students would become demoralized.

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In response to the agreement with the corporation, the student coalition immediately set up a Special Committee on Budgetary Priorities (SCBP). The committee was composed of two black undergraduates, two white undergraduates, and one black graduate student. The charge to the committee was to formulate a budget for the university, rearranging priorities in such a way that there would be no cuts in financial aid, faculty, student services, Afro-American Studies, etc. The charge to the SCBP was based on the recognition that it could not carry out its task unless it had access to all information that President Hornig had used in formulating his budget.

On March 26, the SCBP met with Hornig and the chairperson for the A&E committee. At this meeting Hornig refused to release the material that was deemed necessary to formulate a budget. When the students appealed to the chairperson of the A&E committee, he only reinforced Hornig's position. At this point, it should have been clear that the administration, with the support of the corporation, was determined to exclude student participation from the decision-making process. It also ought to have been clear that the coalition should prepare students for a confrontation with the university. Instead, the coalition chose to attempt to negotiate, not on the basis of concrete demands but to gain access to any piecemeal information, dragging out the process for a month longer. It was only the militance of black students—who were veterans of meaningless university negotiations—and the refusal of the administration to soften its stand that prevented the coalition from totally compromising its position. During the process of negotiations, black students consistently opposed the coalition's reacting to piecemeal information and verbal agreements from the university. Black students consistently held that the task of the coalition was now only to educate students and encourage student participation in the process of preparing to strike. Even though black student predictions were consistently confirmed, and many were known to have first-hand knowledge of prior negotiation attempts with the university administration, the coalition refused to acknowledge the leadership of black students, even though it knew that black student participation

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was crucial to the success of the coalition. Black students throughout the process leading up to the boycott of classes were a vocal and active minority within the coalition.

The point must be stressed that the student coalition had little to do with students' striking. It was the students themselves who decided that a strike was to take place. The student body as a whole knew from the beginning that the nature of the university bureaucracy and the logic of student activity dictated that direct confrontation was the only course of student action. In this context the student coalition had obstructed the logical ends of student activity. Only the actions of the opposition within the coalition and the militance of the student body ensured that a strike would take place.

The significance of the student strike was not to be found in the coalition's demands. In fact, on this issue, the student coalition was totally out of touch with the realities of student life and activity. Given the level of student militance, the student coalition demanded too little from the corporation and the administration. Although the demands were progressive, they fell short of asking for some type of student control and participation in the decision-making process. In the final analysis the students were striking for more control over their lives—the principle of self-determination. The university bureaucracy had reduced students to mere machines, programming every aspect of their lives, generating an enormous waste of human initiative and creativity. In place of human activity, alienation from all human functions existed; instead of the ends of the university being humankind, the ends had become the market. The result of this alienation has been apathy, demoralization, and mass irresponsibility among students. It was the soullessness of the university that the students were rebelling against. The demands represented only one aspect of their attempt to assert their humanity.

The strike was to last only four days, April 15-18. The long drawn-out process leading up to the strike and the strike-week activities demoralized the students and dampened their enthusiasm. From the standpoint of educating and raising the awareness of students—except Third World students—the strike was unsuccessful. During the week of the strike, the op-

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portunist leadership deserted the coalition and failed to involve the students in activities that would have educated them to the bankruptcy of the administration. While some workshops were set up to educate, the strike in general was chaotic and lacking any direction. This lack of direction was the fault of the student coalition. During the whole process leading up to the strike, the coalition leaders concerned themselves entirely with the image they presented to the university, refusing to consider the potential of students as a force for change. There was a conscious attempt to foster the illusion that the corporation and most members of the administration were in agreement with the demands of the coalition. However, this view was wholly unrealistic since it ignored the fact that the purpose of bureaucracy is to manipulate the lives of students from the outside, ensuring that they remain passive, apathetic, powerless, and irresponsible. The task of the corporation is to be an overseer of an institution which has the aim of providing the "right" ideology, "correct" discipline, and the "proper" attitudes for students to enter the workforce; and of producing a skilled worker to be bought and sold on the (labor) market. Therefore, the university is designed to produce a commodity —the student. In the schemes of organization, the corporation rules the university, the administration manages it for the corporation, and students are the produced commodity.

Efforts to ally students with the corporation and administrators were therefore a conscious attempt to divert the discontent of students to other matters so that students would not question the bureaucracy and its legitimacy. (It was later discovered that the leader of the faction pushing in this direction was shortly to begin work for the university.)

In any event the reactionary faction of the coalition was not able to prevent the strike, but it was able to delay the strike and divert the coalition from the realization that only students, in alliance with the university workers, possessed the power for creative change at Brown.

When the coalition began to address itself to students, it did so in a way that belittled student consciousness. Thus, when the strike materialized, the coalition was totally unprepared to

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answer the question of what to do next. A number of the student coalition's leaders recognizing that with the strike the movement of students was now out of their control, deserted the coalition and went directly to the corporation to try to arrange some compromise. In essence, the student coalition that once perceived itself as the vanguard of the movement at Brown now found itself lagging behind the mass movement of students. As a result, students, outstripping their "vanguard," found the strike chaotic and lacking in direction.

The lack of organization during the strike allowed members of the Young Socialist Alliance to come in and run workshops on issues unrelated to the struggle against bureaucracy and the necessity of *conscious* management of student life by students. The YSA clearly revealed its opportunistic nature by focusing on attempts to recruit new members instead of encouraging members of the coalition to become aware of the nature of an oppressive bureaucracy and the necessity of student participation in the decision-making process of the university.

On April 19, after four days of the strike, the A&E committee met and approved President Hornig's budget, which did not meet any of the student coalition's demands. This was a surprisingly blatant move by the university in response to student unrest. However, the corporation perceived, correctly, that the process leading to the strike, the strike-week itself, and its own refusal to recognize student demands, would demoralize and further add to students' sense of powerlessness. Yet the corporation was clever enough to offer what might be considered some form of responsiveness to students.

The A&E committee had approved Hornig's budget—which meant decreases in the number of students receiving financial aid and/or a reduction in the size of financial aid packages. In response to the students' demand for no cuts in financial aid to blacks, the corporation responded: "The corporation recognizes the desirability of maintaining a socio-economically diverse student body." The corporation requested that the committee dealing with admissions and financial aid should report to the president, faculty, and the Corporation Committee

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on Student Life by January 15, 1976. In response to student demands on rearranging budgetary priorities, the corporation responded that it "welcomes efforts that are in progress to develop an ongoing mechanism which will enable students and faculty to contribute to the formulation of plans and priorities which define budgetary policy." Lastly, in response to black demands of no cut-backs in black faculty, supportive services, Afro-American studies, black matriculation, and financial aid for black students, the corporation proposed that a Committee on Minority Affairs be established. This committee was to consist of three corporation members (two of whom were alleged to be racists), two administrators, two faculty members, one graduate student, and three undergraduates, two of whom would be nominated by OUAP.

These were the answers to student demands: ignoring student demands, the university proposed what was hailed as constructive mechanisms for change. The corporation thus displayed nothing but contempt toward students, ignoring their demands and protests, and instead offering more advisory committees that could do no more than engage in meaningless discussion sessions.

Rebuffed and reprimanded by the corporation, the coalition attempted to regroup. First, it decided to state that the corporation's response to the demands put forward was not adequate. But when faced with the question of what to do next, the coalition hesitated on a key question: the composition of the membership. The coalition was divided into three distinct groups: the moderates, willing to accept any compromise with the university; the democratic group, considered radicals; and the OUAP, also considered radicals. If the coalition was to take further action, then it could not proceed with part of its membership committed to accepting any compromise, including the so-called "mechanisms" proposed by the corporation. But instead of expelling members not committed to student power, the coalition held that it must be a group representative of all viewpoints, a position which doomed it to inactivity. Furthermore, the subsequent actions of black students made the student coalition irrelevant. Recognizing the futility of the student coalition, the OUAP had no other choice than to

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dismiss the coalition and concentrate its efforts solely on the demands of black students.

On Sunday, April 20, the OUAP voted unanimously to reject the response of the corporation to the students' demands. At the same meeting black students unanimously voted to prepare themselves for a takeover of University Hall, the university central administrative building, and simultaneously to develop more student support for the action. Two other events of significance took place at this meeting. A proposal to boycott the businesses and products represented by members of the corporation, introduced by the Latin American Students' Organization, was unanimously approved. Also, it was unanimously agreed that the OUAP would support the demands of the Latin American and Asian-American Students' Organizations. Furthermore, if these organizations agreed to participate in the takeover, their demands would be considered co-equal with the demands of OUAP. Thus from this point all activity was that of the Third World Coalition, composed of the OUAP, the Latin American Students' Organization, and the Asian-American Students' Organization.

On Monday, April 21, the Third World Coalition met to concretize plans for the takeover. Strategy was developed, and a lawyer was brought in to discuss the possible legal ramifications that might result. It was also decided that 50 students would enter the building, while the rest would be either on the picket line or preparing food for those inside University Hall. It was clear that the only recourse was to take over a building. Those opposed to this course seldom raised direct objections to the idea but instead began to attack the process of preparing for the takeover: to delay the process unnecessarily was to dampen students' enthusiasm and demoralize once-confident individuals.

As the process became drawn out, the feeling emerged that the plan was unorganized and chaotic. Students became skeptical of the feasibility of the takeover precisely because actions of this kind have enormous personal consequences if not carried out correctly. Dismissal from school or even a term in the state penitentiary might be the consequences of disorganization. Even so, perfect organization would by no means ensure

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victory or immunity from legal and academic prosecution. Still only an organized takeover could bring success.

On Tuesday, April 22, rumors circulated around the university that black students were planning a takeover. The administration, responding to the tension created by the rumors, called in the leadership of the Third World Coalition to discuss Third World students' demands. Nothing was accomplished at the meeting, but the administration promised a response in a few days. This time the students were not fooled by empty promises. Recognizing that this was an attempt by the university to placate Third World student discontent, the Third World Coalition decided to move forward with its plans for a takeover rather than wait for the administration's response.

The leadership formed committees to finalize plans. Nearly 200 students came to meetings, only to find committees in a state of complete chaos and a leadership with little idea of what to do. Skepticism among students became widespread. Many began to doubt the ability of the leadership, and some of the leaders began to doubt the commitment of students and the feasibility of a takeover.

On Wednesday, April 23, the leadership of the Third World Coalition met to discuss where they stood in relationship to a takeover. This was the low point of student enthusiasm. The leadership was in a state of disarray, lacking confidence both in itself and in the students. Worse was that many students had made clear that they had little confidence in the existing leadership, which was the same as that of the OUAP—a five-member committee, composed of two freshmen and three sophomores. The two freshmen were new to the situation at Brown, and of the three sophomores two had never really been involved with black students in an *organizational* sense. The remaining sophomore had been an active member in OUAP but had never been in an *administrative* position. In sum, while there was no question of commitment and willingness to take responsibility, the leadership lacked experience in initiating and carrying out decisions. Recognizing this inexperience, many students did not have confidence in the leadership.

The main question on Wednesday was who would lead

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the takeover. After some initial struggle, the question was resolved by the five-member committee yielding leadership for the takeover to more experienced members of the OUAP.

The actual planning for the takeover took place between 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. Wednesday. Key aspects of the takeover were worked out: communications, procedure for taking over the building, time and day of the takeover, security force, etc. The key at this point was not necessarily that students could not have undertaken the takeover without the change in leadership, but that yielding leadership to more experienced members gave the students more confidence in the feasibility of the project.

It was decided that Thursday would be the day. But only those assigned to go inside the building would know this; the rest would be told to expect a call any morning between Thursday and the following week. The call would go out between 5:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. Students were to report to their stations by 6:30 A.M. and wait for further instructions. (There were two stations, one on each side of the campus—Churchill House and Poland House.)

A system was worked out whereby the person in charge of communications would be notified and would immediately call various students. The latter in turn had lists they were to contact. If each student carried through, all black and Latino students would be contacted.

On Thursday, April 24, at approximately 5:00 A.M., the process of contacting people to mobilize for the takeover began. By 6:30 at least 250 students had been mobilized—at least 100 at Poland House and 150 at Churchill House. At about 7:20 lookouts confirmed that the doors to University Hall were open. However, it was decided not to leave until 8:00 o'clock. This precaution was taken to make sure that all students were at least aware that the Third World Coalition had attempted a takeover. (It was feared that the university administration would attempt to physically prevent the takeover. If this were to happen and if students attempted the takeover too early, then the student body would be unaware of what the Third World Coalition was doing.)

At 8:00 A.M. both groups left their respective stations. The

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groups converged on University Hall, encircling the building. Sixteen students went inside to check out the building and evacuate the secretaries and deans. Once this had been accomplished, 20 more students entered the building and secured the building to allow no one inside without permission. At the height of activity, about 300 Third World Students were on the picket line surrounding University Hall. About 500 white students formed a second picket line encircling the university green, while about one thousand students stood observing what was happening.

The choice of University Hall as the target of the takeover had been influenced by several considerations. The building is the central administration building for the university. By seizing it, students effectively shut down most administrative work carried out by the university. Therefore, the university had to deal with the students occupying the building before administrative work could continue. Secondly, the building is centrally located: most students walk past the building at least once a day. Moreover, a good number of classes are held directly in back of, in front of, and to the side of University Hall. Therefore, no one could ignore the activities of the Third World Coalition.

Even though planning was accomplished in a short period of time, the takeover was well organized and executed. Those students who took part in the seizure had been screened, were clear on why they were in the building, and understood how to act. Outside, the pickets were organized into shifts. Students organized their own security force and marshals to direct picketing. Pickets were well educated to their tasks, and students had an effective press corps and negotiators. Also, the food and communications committees were very efficient.

One of the characteristics of the movement of black and Third World peoples is that when they act collectively they seldom represent partial or reactionary interests. Accordingly, the takeover immediately drew in the black community of Providence. The actions of the students were not isolated. The black community understood and appreciated the takeover. In response, the community came to the aid of students, offering

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food, humanpower, and any other form of needed assistance. Community organizations, black fraternal organizations, Prison Reform Organizations, the NAACP, Neighborhood Youth Corp, etc., all offered various forms of assistance. As the struggle of black and Third World students was placed in the forefront of the student movement, the movement transcended the bounds of the university, although its focus remained at the internal contradictions within the university. Actual support from the black community was just beginning to build up. Only a swift capitulation by the administration to students' demands prevented the movement from getting completely out of its control.

The shape and spread of the entire movement were not the result of an elaborate plan, but precisely the result of spontaneity—i.e., the free and creative activities of students. The success of the takeover was not due to an outside organizational force directing students but rather to their own activities. The takeover was an expression of the self-activity and self-organization of Third World students. The result was that suppressed potentials for *conscious management* of student life by students were released.

The takeover was the spontaneous reaction of Third World students to the oppression of the university bureaucracy. Third World students were well educated to the necessity for radical action against the university. Moreover, the same process that educated Third World students was responsible for educating white students as to why Third World students had little recourse but to resist oppression by taking action of this kind. The takeover therefore enjoyed widespread support in the student body. While there were some incidents of heckling of white pickets by white students, there were no major incidents of a racial nature and little racial tension within the student body.

The education of students was not the result of a massive political effort: rather it was a process of *self-education*. In this process, one student action logically followed the next. Once students had information and knowledge of what was taking place, most could understand what actions were necessary at any given time.

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In the course of crisis and struggle against the university, once-latent feelings came to open expression. The administration of the university was rejected by students precisely because they understood who the administrators were: a group of professional mystifiers determined to reduce students to mere commodities for the market.

Yet this rejection of the administration of the university by students also meant a rejection of the traditional forms of education and organization for struggle against the university. In this context white students were prepared for the strike, but the strike failed because it never educated students to the potential they possessed for creative change in the institution. The strike did not destroy feelings of powerlessness among students, and the decision of the corporation to approve Hornig's budget and ignore students' demands added to this sense of powerlessness. While they knew that the corporation's response to their demands was a rejection of the right of students to exercise some control over their own lives, most felt powerless to take any further actions. At this point the student body could only look to the leadership of black students.

As stated earlier, the Third World students were well educated and organized. However, both education and organization ceased to be the job of specialists. *The student struggle was the means of education and organization.* Organization in this context is where an increasing number of individuals learn about collective action, run their own affairs, and fulfill and develop themselves by working for a common objective in reciprocal recognition. It was the same process of self-education that organized and disciplined those involved in the takeover. Moreover, the action was very well executed. Students knew what their tasks were and how they were to be carried out. The level of organization was greater and more precise than the most optimistic had anticipated. It was the spontaneous actions of students that created the takeover and its ultimate success. In this regard, there is no contradiction between organization and spontaneity; on the contrary, there is a dialectic interrelation between the two.

Discipline necessary in any serious organization can arise

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in two ways. "It can arise from a system of artificial unanimity enforced by edicts and prescriptions," a method which is central to bureaucracy and counter-productive. "Or it can arise from a common tradition and loyalty built on the basis of common work, mutual education, and a realistic and responsible relationship to the spontaneous activities of the masses." Further:

> The specific and concrete form organization takes, varies in accordance with the objective situation and historical experiences confronting those oppressed and exploited people who discard their petty differences and engage in collective thought and action. The life span of every new form of organization which has emerged out of the spontaneous awakening and creative political activity of the masses is likewise determined by the circumstances and objective conditions under which an organized body of people have to function.*

Every phase of the student struggle was an organic process relating to students' lives. At no point did external forces play a significant role in determining the course of the student struggle. At all times the student struggle was directed toward internal contradictions within student life at Brown University. All student activity was the expression of the essence of dialectics:

> (1) All development takes place as a result of self-movement, not organization or direction by external forces.
> (2) Self-movement springs from and is the overcoming of antagonisms within an organism, not the struggle against external foes.
> (3) It is not the world of nature that confronts man as an alien power to be overcome. It is the alien power that he has himself created.
> (4) The end toward which mankind is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is not the enjoyment, ownership, or use of goods, but self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, not utility.**

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* Kimathi Mohammad, *Organization and Spontaneity: The Theory of the Vanguard Party and Its Application to the Black Movement in the U.S. Today.* (Marcus Garvey Institute: Lansing, Michigan, 1974), p. 12.

** George Rawick, "Working Class Self-Activity," *Radical America,* volume 3, number 2, p. 31.

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Thirty-eight hours after the takeover, the university conceded to 20 out of 21 demands. It recognized Latinos and Asian-Americans as distinct minority groups; it promised to increase both black and Latino students' matriculation by at least 25 percent over the next three years; students are to have some input into the admissions process, recruitment of Third World students, and hiring and recruitment of faculty and administrators: moreover, there would be no cutbacks in financial aid, black or women faculty, or the Afro-American Studies Program. Lastly, an admissions officer and two minority students would be provided for the sole purpose of recruiting minority students.

While mechanisms were provided enabling Third World students to oversee the functioning of the university, the concessions fell short of complete student control over the university. It is understood that the only way to prevent the university from taking back Third World students' gains is for students to maintain pressure on the university.

It must be stressed that while the takeover was spontaneous, there was a necessary process that students were forced to undertake. First, Brown has a past history of student struggles. This tradition was understood and maintained by some of the senior membership within the Third World Coalition—particularly the OUAP. Although many realized the futility of negotiations, they had to allow themselves to be dragged through the process one more time. Every activity was necessary and utilized to raise the consciousness of students—in particular, Third World students. From negotiations to a student boycott of classes to a student takeover were all steps in raising the consciousness of students. All that was necessary was to keep students informed and attempt to involve them in the various activities and processes leading to the student actions. Many students who in February were opposed to a student takeover were prepared by April 24 for the very action they initially opposed. Thus students had been thoroughly prepared for a takeover. The key was that education was not seen as coming from something external to them—i.e., consciousness brought from the outside—but as something integral to their very being.

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Student activity at Brown University was successful because the university conceded to the collective power of students; but more important, the activities have increased the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies, and the self-activity of the students involved, and has assisted in their demystification.

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE TANZANIAN STATE: A CRITIQUE

By Said Salum

The article by Haroub Othman entitled "The Tanzanian State" (MR, December 1974) requires an answer. A concrete analysis of the state is of utmost importance in the struggle for socialism: the correct stategy and tactics of the struggle cannot be worked out without such an analysis. Moreover this analysis itself tends to be deepened by the experiences gained in the process of the struggle. All this is a truism after Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune and the experiences of revolutionary proletarian movements ever since.

Thus Othman should be congratulated for his timely and appropriate choice of topic. The image of Tanzania as a non-Marxist alternative to socialist development needs to be demystified. Liberals, social democrats, and pseudo-Marxists from the West as well as the local ideologues of the regime have contributed much to building up this false image. Othman's main contribution is to stress the basic question of the state which has been conveniently forgotten by these ideologues.

However, that is as far as we can go with Othman. For to stress the central role of the state at a certain historical level of abstraction and at the same time to make a scientific analysis of its concrete manifestation in a particular situation are not identical things. In our view Othman's "analysis" of the state in Tanzania is both superficial and misleading. In fact, it is a classic case of an "analysis" which begins from Marxist principles but, as a

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result of a political somersault, ends up in reformist and revisionist conclusions. We shall substantiate these remarks below.

Assessing the economic situation in Tanzania, Othman correctly points out that in spite of the nationalizations and other measures such as rural collectivization which followed the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Tanzania's economy continues to be a victim of neocolonial exploitation and dependency. And this is not, as some would like to maintain, a result of "progressive moves being undermined by imperialist sabotage" but a direct and logical consequence of post-Arusha economic policies. As Shivji, whom Othman mentions, has shown, the form of nationalizations was particularly suited to the long-term interests of metropolitan capital.* By promoting joint ventures and signing management agreements with foreign capital, the state won the confidence of multinational corporations and committed itself to the defense of their basic interests. Witness the multiplied inflow of foreign "aid" and investments to Tanzania after the Arusha Declaration. For the foreign corporations the situation is one in which, with minimum risks and almost no responsibility, they can get maximum returns. The case of the fertilizer factory managed by Kloeckener of Germany is only an outstanding confirmation of this.

The so-called collectivization program in the rural areas has been a strategy to bring together isolated peasants into villages in order to increase production of export crops for the world market. The ideological justification of this policy has been that it would facilitate provision of essential social services to the peasantry. But objectively, its effect has been to rationalize the appropriation of surplus by the state and to reinforce the export-oriented structure of the economy. In this sense, it is a continuation of a process begun during colonialism, and it is not surprising that the program has been strongly backed by World Bank financing and advice. As a recent visitor here remarked, Tanzania is in a unique position of building "socialism" with the assistance of the World Bank!

Although Othman would tend to agree with what has been said so far, his fundamental error is that he considers economic structures apart from the social relations (i.e., class relations) dialectically engendered by them. Firstly, he overlooks that the

* "Capitalism Unlimited: Public Corporations in Partnership with Multinational Corporations," in *The African Review*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1973).

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nationalizations of 1967 were the culmination of a process of class struggle. They were a means by which the upper stratum of the petty bourgeoisie, which had taken over state power at the time of independence, struck a decisive blow at its economic rival, the Asian commercial bourgeoisie, and paved the way for the latter's eventual displacement as economic intermediaries vis-à-vis imperialism. At the same time, through nationalization the monopolistic economic dominance of the British bourgeoisie, a colonial legacy, was weakened. Thus the ruling stratum (class-in-formation) not only consolidated its territorial hegemony but also secured a greater freedom of maneuver within the international capitalist system. Lacking such a perspective, Othman fails to see that the post-Arusha policies of greater state intervention in the economy have led not only to newer forms of neocolonial exploitation and dependence but also to the accelerated growth of a ruling *class*—the bureaucratic bourgeoisie—fostered precisely by these trends of statization. If he cared to examine a few statistics, he would discover the obvious fact that public administration has been the fastest growing sector in the economy since 1967, whilst productive sectors have lagged far behind. This is but one indication of the parasitic nature of the ruling class and the state in Tanzania. However, our eclectic friend Othman can in the same breath mention Tanzania's increasing neocolonial dependency, consider the Tanzanian state as tending towards a "people's state," and regard TANU, the ruling party, as a "national liberation movement." One wonders what sort of "liberation" he is talking about!

For Othman, the state is synonymous with the machinery of government. So his "concrete analysis" of the state in Tanzania is conducted in terms of cabinet ministers and ministries. Thus his profound observation is that the ministries in Tanzania "are not only numerous but some of them are completely unrelated to the present development needs of the country." Why? Because there is "an overlapping of functions." So one presumes that if this overlap were removed and the government structure reorganized, development needs would be satisfied! Othman should be happy to learn that these are precisely the terms under which the McKinsey Corporation has been working for the past seven years for the Tanzanian government. In order to fulfill the tasks of this stage of our "revolution," the said corporation has completely overhauled the machinery of regional administration, and restructured major ministries and state corporations. However, what is at issue here is not the relevance or irrelevance of such changes, but which

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class interests they serve. In Tanzania these changes have only served to consolidate and rationalize the rule of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Is it not appropriate to leave such questions for McKinsey to solve and let Marxist analyses deal with more fundamental issues? In the subtitle of his article Othman poses the questions of "control" and "interests," but in his concrete characterization of the Tanzanian state these questions are simply glossed over.

At one point in his article Othman considers that the state in Tanzania is tending to be a "people's state," whilst at another point he considers it to be the *same* as the colonial state! Needless to say, both these notions are erroneous. Let us consider the latter first.

The fundamental feature which the colonial state and the present-day state have in common is that both are dictatorships against the working class and the peasantry. But to conclude from this that both the states are one and the same is like saying that gold and copper are the same because both are solid yellow metallic substances. The colonial state must be considered, especially in Tanzania where there was no significant settler population, to be an extension of the metropolitan state directly serving the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. The act of achieving political independence represented a break with this situation. However, one cannot say that the Tanzanian state came into being overnight. Rather the colonial state was transformed into the present-day Tanzanian state with the unfolding of domestic class struggles and the resolution of contradictions between the ruling section of the petty bourgeoisie and the former colonial power. The overhauling of trade unions and their absorption into the state illustrate the former aspect, whilst the army mutiny against the British officers, the complete reorganization of the armed forces which followed it, and the anti-British foreign policy are a reflection of the latter.

The crunch came with the Arusha Declaration and the ending of the dominant position of British capital in the Tanzanian economy. Through the state, the ruling section of the petty bourgeoisie would transform itself into a bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The Tanzanian state had matured and evolved its distinctive apparatuses. No doubt much had been carried over from the colonial days, but this precisely reflects the structural continuities in the economy. However, the state now is controlled by an indigenous bureaucratic bourgeoisie with a relative degree of autonomy from international bourgeoisies. This ruling class has its distinctive

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ideology and specific instruments like the party, the trade unions, the mass media (some of which are under the state) in addition to the repressive organs of the state to exercise and maintain its rule. So it is not simply a question of black faces replacing white ones but of a different class controlling a modified state apparatus. Everything, with due respect to Othman, is not the same. If it were, then dialectics should be thrown overboard in favor of metaphysical eclectics!

Othman comes up with the notion of a "people's state" when dealing with the question of the present stage of revolution in Tanzania. Earlier on he had vigorously opposed the bourgeois notion of "state above society," only later to embrace the petty bourgeois notion of "society above the state"—a "people's state." Let us put his arguments in the context of the stage of revolution. Othman correctly says that the global trend is one of transition from capitalism to socialism, but points out that not every stream in this worldwide current is facing the same tasks. While some countries have already started building socialism, others are engaged in anticolonial struggles. For the former colonies, the stage of revolution is that of "national democratic revolution," which is "a stage of transition from a semicolonial, dependent situation to a socialist order," and in which the task is "to consummate the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic revolution." So far so good, since we are dealing with generalities. But Othman fails to elucidate the *specific tasks* of the national democratic revolution in Tanzania. Some of the tasks he mentions are clearly out of place. For example, how does one abolish "the feudal system and its survivals" unless one sees no difference between Ethiopia and Tanzania?

The state, in this period of national democracy, to quote Othman, "will not represent the dictatorship of one class, but will become a new, broader form of rule by the people; the determining role will no doubt have to be played by the alliance of working class, peasantry, and revolutionary intelligentsia." A few comments are in order here. Let us first reiterate that the present state in Tanzania is a class dictatorship against the working class and the peasantry. Also, in the stage of national democracy the state will remain a dictatorship—not some sort of benevolent guardian over society. The difference will be that in the latter case it will be a dictatorship over the ex-bureaucratic bourgeoisie and agents of imperialism. In certain transitional situations, it is possible that the state would represent a joint dictatorship of various revolu-

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tionary classes.* National democracy, being such a transition period, may have a state which represents a joint dictatorship of the working class, the peasantry, and sections of the petty bourgeoisie. However, the leading role here will have to be played by the proletariat. All the progressive classes cannot, contrary to what Othman says, play a leading role at one and the same time.

Let us now see how Tanzania is to enter this phase of national democracy. According to Othman "a condition *sine qua non* for the success of this national democratic phase is the existence of a well-organized, disciplined party with a clear ideology, to be at the head of the broad national front. Whether TANU, the ruling party in Tanzania, as presently constituted, can be regarded as such, and whether it is capable of such a task, is a debatable issue." We say that for the success of national democratic revolution what is necessary is a *proletarian* party led by *proletarian* ideology. And there is no question of having an academic debate on whether TANU is or is not such a party. TANU is a party controlled by, and serving the interests of, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

But Othman assumes that TANU is a national liberation movement, so for him the only problem is to organize a "vanguard *within* TANU" which will play the leading revolutionary role. How this is to be done, heaven knows—presumably through political intrigues. Even the success of these intrigues assumes that there is not already a bureaucratic bourgeois vanguard within TANU. Othman admits that the sole trade union in Tanzania, NUTA, is bureaucratically controlled and completely alienated from the workers. But he is enough of a visionary to foresee that if NUTA "redefines its role and rearranges its list of priorities," it can be made to "undergo a structural change" so that it would become "a real movement of the workers." For him TANU and NUTA are not institutions controlled by and serving the interests of the ruling class but mythical entities which can be changed at will to serve this or that end.** What a brilliant flight of imagination! Once these transformations are complete, Othman is sure that TANU and NUTA "would then be able to face the question of the state and solve it." One wonders whether there is an aca-

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* See Mao Tse-tung, *On New Democracy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966).

** This is precisely the sort of illusion fostered by the ruling ideology in Tanzania.

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demic question on the state to be solved or fundamental class contradictions to be resolved.

In formulating the issues as he does, Othman is in effect implying that the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in Tanzania is capable of successfully leading the national democratic revolution and reaching socialism. Historical experience everywhere refutes this. It is true that the leading fraction of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie played a leading role in the anticolonial struggle and initiated many aspects of national democratic struggles. But once in full control of state power and to the extent that it consolidates itself as a ruling class, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie becomes a brake on the development of the struggle for national democracy. The Kuomintang in China initiated and, in the early period, played a leading role in the struggle for national democracy in China. But later on it became an enemy of national democracy. For Othman historical experience is not a valid guide. He would rather rely on wishful thinking. For him the formal statement of democratic aims by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the initiation of a few half-hearted measures here and there constitute the real beginnings of the national democratic revolution. The Chilean experience should have been sufficient to explode his illusions, but somehow he clings to them.

Othman's theories are versions of old revisionism in new disguise, which stipulate some evolutionary process of transition toward socialism. Class struggle and proletarian dictatorship are not relevant for him. For those who have been keeping up with recent events in Tanzania, it is clear that current trends—constitutional changes to make the party supreme* (i.e., to entrench the rule of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie), forced herding of peasants into villages, enactment of repressive labor laws, educational policy intended to buttress class rule, the gradual reversal of progressive stands on the liberation of Southern Africa, etc.—all point to the need to do some serious analysis rather than indulge in wishful thinking of the type represented by Othman.

* In China, constitutional supremacy of the party went hand in hand with giving the people constitutional rights to strike and protest. In Tanzania, party supremacy goes along with announcements of more stringent labor laws designed to rob all initiative from the workers!

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MORE AGAINST CYNICISM

By a Teacher

I found Norman Diamond's review "Against Cynicism" (MR, June 1976) very clear and helpful. I should like to enlarge upon my own experience and thinking on this topic. I am a junior high school teacher in a black urban community, with friends on the senior high school level.

The cynicism of students is of serious concern to those of us who are interested in preparing them to act responsibly for social change in their own behalf. We see youngsters of thirteen and fourteen turned off by the (admittedly trivial) practice of student organization, going on to express total disinterest in registering to vote at age eighteen. At the younger age they are already dominated by the anarchic principle that they are not going to trust any member of their own group to preside over them or to represent them for any purpose whatever. They are alienated by the ideas of stable group organization and discipline to carry on any extended campaign to achieve a goal of their own choosing.

A couple of years ago I sold a group on the idea of having officers, whom they could recall. They elected a militant president who resigned when they resisted his attempt to enforce group solidarity in a situation where this action would result in an innocent classmate suffering because of his advocacy of protecting the guilty. The next president, in private conference with me, confided that although they took votes in his church on what to

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do, he didn't know why. He paid careful attention to my explanation that he could be misled by a few loud voices into believing he had read the mind of the group as a whole or that he might even be misled by his own bias unless he counted the number who were for a proposal, and he began to call for votes. He soon became concerned about the non-voters and communicated to them his need as president to know what they expected of him. Gradually members began to respond by taking seriously the value of their opinions. Then, as the rhetoricians began to realize the necessity of convincing rather than outshouting, discussions became quieter and more reasoned.

But this process is not going on in many classes. Too often teachers are accepting student reluctance and, in the interest of expediting, are making decisions students ought to make, even to appointing class officers, because available time is limited, and because they cannot tolerate the chaos involved in natural development of early adolescent cynical anarchists into sometimes radical, functioning groups.

For example, last year 90 percent of the ninth graders were habitually violating a school rule. I thought it would be valuable practical experience for them to use available channels to seek a change in the rule. I put it up to my group and eleven students voted for taking the question to Student Council; no one voted against it, but seventeen abstained. Their reason for abstaining was, "It's no use." I had to get a promise from the Student Council sponsor that he would permit free consideration of the proposal before the latent majority would cast their votes.

We have many teachers still too insecure to deal openly with organized student action, as well as others (including some who are politically radical) who ignore or prevent student group action on the grounds that "they don't know what's good for them," or "they will go along with what I decide," or "it's my classroom and I make the rules." As a result students are being deprived of an essential element of education, learning to participate in making decisions about their own business. The reluctance of students to participate, instead of being perceived as symptomatic of a severe educational deficit, is viewed as facilitating teacher and administration control, which is seen as good in itself. No one seems to see this lack of orderly channels of participation as bearing any relation to increasing individual student violence.

Teachers are gradually changing their own perceptions of the possibility of affecting their teaching conditions through the col-

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lective bargaining process. But the time has not yet come for teacher union locals to champion student action. The increasing student violence, in fact, is moving them the other way, toward more rigid repression in the name of self-defense.

Mr. Diamond's assessment of cynicism as counter-productive is, therefore, one whose accuracy I can verify. It does lead away from "decent change." It does facilitate maintenance of the status quo. It builds tolerance for repression. And thus, as he says, "the regrouping of capitalism may be . . . significantly harsher to more of the population than has been true in the past few decades."

The solution cannot be found by ideological argument. It must be recognized by many different groups and worked on in many ways. The most important groups are those at the grass-roots. Some of them are just beginning to recognize the need. The Nation of Islam, for one, has made a 180-degree change, from forbidding to urging political participation.

We need people in parents' organizations to work for parental pressure for good school experiences in democratic processes. We need people to organize unorganized workers not only into unions, but also into voting blocs at the precinct committee and ward level, to rebuild people's confidence in their ability to function as groups. These field workers need not be socialists of any kind. Their most important talent must be the ability to speak the people's language and to make the inevitable defeats constructive experiences. They must be willing to accept the people's concerns as valid opportunities to build mutual trust and sophistication in dealing with government, whether they seem to have a direct bearing on radical social change or not; getting a traffic light will do for a start.

A film that teaches cynicism is unfortunate mainly because it reinforces a cynicism that is already too strong. Someone ought, therefore, to seek out a film maker or group to interest them in creating a film that teaches, "You CAN (together) fight City Hall." For this purpose the present diversity of the film industry is a godsend. One can more easily find some artists who can appreciate the value of their own talents in rousing public participation and who are in a position to maintain artistic control, to resist cosmeticism of the problem, to avoid an unreal romantic ending or, for that matter, an ideological load greater than people are prepared to accept as credible. One good box office success presenting real human beings involved in a believable grass-roots campaign would stimulate imitations in many other little companies.

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Right now it is much more urgent to teach people to get involved than to teach them any particular ideology, don't you agree?

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(*Continued from inside front cover*)
work on *Science and Prejudice* (both of which, we hope, are far enough along to be edited and published by his wife, Dr. Amy Loeb Rosebury). MR readers will also remember Dr. Rosebury from the charming essay "Eleanor, Daughter of Karl Marx," (MR, January 1973) by his father Aaron Rosebury, which Dr. Rosebury found among his father's papers and sent to us, along with a brief biographical introduction. We had looked forward to having Dr. Rosebury as a regular MR author: it will be difficult indeed to find as compatible a commentator on scientific themes.

MR Press begins this month (January 1977) a major publishing undertaking, Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution,* which will appear this year and next in three parts totaling five volumes. The first part, consisting of two volumes, is entitled "State and Bureaucracy" and should be out by the time this issue reaches subscribers ($28.50 the set, plus $1 for postage and handling on domestic orders). The second part, also two volumes, is on "The Politics of Social Classes" and is scheduled for publication late in 1977. The third part, "Political Power and Socialist Society," one volume, will be out in 1978. There is, to our knowledge, nothing comparable to this authoritative work in any language. It draws on an enormous body of material, a large part of which is unfamiliar except to a small circle of Marx scholars, and it presents its analyses and conclusions in refreshingly straightforward language and style which make it, in contrast to so many learned works of Marxology, a pleasure to read. We are convinced that Draper's work will become a standard reference source which no serious social science library, whether public or university or private, will be able to do without. We would of course have preferred to publish it at much lower prices, but that would have required subsidization which, not surprisingly, is not available for Marxist scholarship. As for our friends who will need this work, we can only remind them that MR Associates can buy all the volumes for their own use at half the list price.

A revolutionary process about which very little seems to be known in the United States has been under way for some time in the East African country of Somalia. We hope to have a report on this in an early issue. Meanwhile, a subscriber who was recently in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, has written telling us of a new course in political economy at Lafoole College of Education (Mogadishu University) being organized by our friend Hussein Adam, Chairman of Social Sciences, who returned to his native land after several years of teaching African and black studies at Brandeis University. Hussein specifically asked that the message be relayed to us for inclusion in this space that the university library has an urgent need for books and other study materials. MR readers who have spare copies of any MR Press books or other general Marxist works in the social sciences and socialist development are asked to send them to: Dr. Hussein Adam, P.O. Box 964, S.I.D.A.M., Mogadishu, Somali Democratic Republic.

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